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Phi Beta Kappa Address

NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY JUNE 13 1893

BY

WILLIAM FREDERICK POOLE LL D

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MY leading purpose in the preparation of this address was a discussion of the relations of the University Library to University Education. I wished to show that the study of Bibliography and of the scientific methods of using books should have an assured place in the University Curriculum; that a wise and professional bibliographer should be a member of the faculty and have a part in training all the students; that the Library should be his class room, and that all who go forth into the world as graduates should have such an intelligent and practical knowledge of books as will aid them in their studies

through life, and the use of books be to them a perpetual delight and refreshment. Books are wiser than any professor and all the faculty; and they can be made to give up much of their wisdom to the student who knows where to go for it, and how to extract it.

I do not mean that the university student should learn the contents of the most useful books; but I do mean that he should know of their existence, what they treat of, and what they will do for him. He should know what are the most important general reference books which will answer not only his own questions, but the multitude of inquiries put to him by less-favored associates who regard him as an educated man. If a question arises as to the existence, authorship, or subject of a book, an educated man should know the catalogues or bibliographies by which he can readily clear up the doubt. The words Watt, Larousse, Graesse, Quérard,

Hoefer, Kayser, Hinrichs, Meyer, Hain and Vapereau should not be unmeaning sounds to him. He should know the standard writers on a large variety of subjects. He should be familiar with the best method by which the original investigation of any topic may be carried on. When he has found it, he appreciates, perhaps for the first time, what books are for, and how to use them. He finds himself a professional literary or scientific worker, and that books are the tools of his profession. It is one of the most delightful and inspiring incidents in a student's experience when he has discovered a key to the treasury of knowledge, a method by which he can do useful and practical work, and that he has a function in life. No person has any claim to be a scholar until he can conduct such an original investigation with ease and pleasure. This facile proficiency does not come by intuition, nor from the clouds. Where

else is it to be taught, if not in the college or university? With it, a graduate is prepared to grapple with his professional studies, to succeed in editorial work, or in any literary or scientific pursuit for which he may have the taste and qualification.

It is a well-known fact, and one regretted by the wisest educators, that the great majority of the students of the colleges and universities of the country graduate with very little knowledge of books or of their uses. How the evil can be remedied, is a question easier to ask than to answer. Any scheme which may be proposed meets with this objection:—"The curric-"ulum is full, and it is not possible to in-"crease it." This objection furnishes me with the opportunity, and a justification, if one be needed, for a discussion of the modern university curriculum.

The attentive observer of higher education has seen, within the past two decades, a marked improvement in college and uni-

versity instruction, and in the direction I have already indicated. More thought is now given to the subject by ripe scholars and experienced educators than ever before; and yet there is abroad a feeling of unrest, and an impression that our educational system is passing through a transition period from one which was exceedingly faulty to some ideal method as yet undeveloped and still in the future.

The need of educated men was never so great as at present; and yet this is an admitted fact, that, while the number of colleges and universities is increasing and the classes of the older institutions are larger, the number of graduates, when compared with the increase of population and wealth, is diminishing. The demand for highly-trained men to fill the positions which the recent amazing development in the sciences and practical arts has created —in chemical and electrical laboratories, in mining, metallurgy, engineering, trans-

portation, and general business — is not supplied. Higher qualifications are needed in each of the old and learned professions. In 1840 the proportion of undergraduates to the population of the country was 1 to 1,549; in 1860, 1 to 2,012; in 1870, 1 to 2,615, and in 1880, 1 to 3,000. The disparity is doubtless greater now. The age at which students enter college is steadily increasing. The average age of freshmen at Harvard on admission is upwards of nineteen years. President Eliot views this fact with solicitude and says it must be reduced. "At the beginning of this century," he remarks, "many students graduated at the "age at which they now enter." Suspecting the tendency to be older than this century, I made an examination of this point with reference to the early classes at Harvard, beginning with the first class of 1642. In the classes from that date to 1659, I selected seventeen men best known for the reputation they had achieved in

life, and, looking up their ages, I found that six of them had entered college at thirteen years of age, two at fourteen, six at fifteen and three at sixteen. It will be a mistake to suppose that the scholastic requirements at Harvard were then low. I shall later state what those requirements were, and will now only remark that there was probably not one graduate at Harvard, in the last class of 1893, who could have passed the final examinations and taken the bachelor's degree in the class of 1642.

The most successful professional and literary men, as a rule, both in this country and in Europe, were the men who completed their college studies early in life. Colleges are now competing with each other in raising the average age of candidates for admission by increasing the technical conditions of entering,—often in the form of grammatical puzzles and philological conundrums. Business

is offering larger prizes to our young men than professional life. Parents are unwilling that their sons should spend from twelve to fifteen years of their mature life in a preparatory school, in college, in professional studies, and in fighting for a lucrative position in the ranks of law, medicine or technical science, when in less time and with less labor and expense they can establish themselves in some profitable business. They do not understand why it is necessary for an American youth to work with grammar and dictionary from six to ten years in learning Latin; and they are amazed when they ascertain that not one in fifty college graduates can speak Latin, or understand it when spoken; can write it with any freedom or accuracy, or read with any pleasure a page of an unfamiliar Latin author at sight. Is it strange that so many college graduates forget their Latin and Greek as soon as possible after they have taken a diploma,

and that occasionally we hear of one who has the courage to boast that, when he opens a copy of Homer, he does not know the Greek alphabet? The Roman boy, on the other hand, learned from the lips of his mother, or of an untrained nurse, usually a slave, to speak Latin at three or four years of age, without grammar, dictionary or drill. It was not the Latin of Cicero or Quintilian; but it was Latin, nevertheless, and better Latin than American college graduates speak. It was the beginning of a familiarity with the Latin tongue which was later developed into an idiomatic and scholarly style. Has the human mind deteriorated in vigor during the past two thousand years? John Stuart Mill learned from the lips of his father to speak, read and write Greek at a very early age. "I have no remembrance," he says in his Autobiography, "of the time "when I began to learn Greek. I have "been told that it was when I was three

"years old. My earliest recollection on "the subject is that of committing to "memory what my father termed *voca-* "*bles*, being lists of common Greek words, "with their signification in English, which "he wrote out for me on cards. Of gram- "mar, until some years later, I learned no "more than the inflexions of the nouns "and verbs; but, after a course of voca- "bles, proceeded at once to translation. "I remember going through Æsop's Fa- "bles, the first Greek book which I read. "I read in 1813 [he was then seven years "old] the first six dialogues of Plato." He gives a summary of "such other Greek "prose authors as I remember to have "read up to the time I was eight years "old, namely: The whole of Herodotus, "Xenophon's Cyropaedia, the Memora- "bilia of Socrates, some of the Lives of "the Philosophers by Diogenes Laërtius, "and part of Lucian and Isocrates." The narrative he gives of his education, he

says, "may be useful in showing how "much more than is commonly supposed "may be taught, and well taught, in those "early years which, in the common modes "of what is called instruction, are little "better than wasted." Later he adds: "The result of the experiment shows the "ease with which this may be done, and "places in a strong light the wretched "waste of so many precious years as are "spent in acquiring a modicum of Latin "and Greek commonly taught to school "boys,—a waste which has led so many "educational reformers to entertain the "ill-judged proposal of discarding those "languages altogether from general edu-"cation."

The objectors to this theory will doubtless say: "John Stuart Mill could do "this; but where is another boy who "could do it?" On this point Mr. Mill remarks: "If I had been by nature ex-"tremely quick of apprehension, or pos-

"sessed a very retentive memory, or were "of a remarkably active and energetic "character, the trial would not be con- "clusive; but, in all these natural gifts, I "am rather below than above par. What "I could do could assuredly be done by "any boy or girl of average capacity and "healthy physical constitution. To the "fact that through the early training be- "stowed on me by my father, I started, "I may fairly say, with the advantage of "a quarter of a century over my contem- "poraries."

This last remark applies not mainly to his knowledge of the classical and modern languages, but to his studies in history, political economy, philosophy and social science, and to his enormous reading in general English and French literature.

Mr. Mill probably underrated his natural gifts; but instances of children acquiring languages as readily, and by the same natural method as he learned Greek and

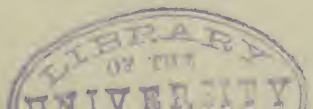
Latin, are matters of common observation. In the crowded foreign districts of Chicago there are children five years of age who have never been to school, and yet they act as interpreters for their parents in four or five languages. The only condition a child needs in learning a language is the opportunity to hear it spoken, and to speak it. The ear, the tongue and the lips are the natural organs for learning language. The eye has only a subordinate function, and with children before they can read it has no function of any sort.

In our modern system of education, the period in the life of a child — when his instinct for language is so alert, his ear so sensitive to sounds, and his memory of words so retentive — is allowed to run to waste. The educators of the middle ages, and even of two centuries ago in our own country, did not make this mistake. Latin was then the language of scholars the

world over. Every educated man could speak and write Latin. It was the language in which great works of science, philosophy and religion were written, and all lectures in the universities of Europe were delivered,— a practice which is continued in some of the universities to this day. Scholars taught their children the classical languages as they did the mother tongue, at the same time and in the same way. Teachers drilled their pupils orally in the use of the language. The modern drudgery of grammar and dictionary work was unknown. John Stuart Mill says that in his day (early in this century) there was no Greek and English dictionary, and that when he met a new word he went to his father for its meaning. Drill in "the subjunctive of the essential part" was deferred until the pupil had a full vocabulary, was familiar with the inflections and with the Roman plan of placing words in constructing a sentence. Syntax was then

evolved from the language itself, and not taken from a grammar. The grammars were very simple and wholly unlike the ponderous and perplexing manuals now put into the hands of modern students to memorize. They had in them little more than the inflections of nouns, pronouns, adjectives and verbs.

The Latin grammar used almost universally for twelve centuries was called a "Donatus", the name of its author, who was born at Rome in the fourth century and was the teacher of St. Jerome. It was one of the early block-books, the precursors of the invention of printing made in the early half of the fifteenth century; and it was actually the first book which, in 1450, came from the press of John Gutenberg, the inventor of printing with movable type. He then was at work on his great folio Bible, finished in 1455, which is generally regarded as the first-printed book. The little grammar was



too small a matter to be called a book. In the large type used on the Bible it made thirty-four pages, and in type of ordinary size only nine pages. From 1450 to 1500 more than fifty editions of this grammar were printed in different countries of Europe.

The next popular Latin grammar was "Corderius," named, like "Donatus," from the Latin name of its author, who was born in France in 1479, and was the teacher of John Calvin. Like its predecessor, it was a very simple manual, and would not give any school boy the headache. More than a thousand editions of "Corderius" have been printed. The last I have noticed was issued in England in 1854.

As the fashion of education in modern times has drifted away from the natural method of teaching the classical languages, grammars have been increasing in size and in incomprehensibility to the

youthful mind. The aim of instruction also in preparatory schools and colleges has wandered from the old purpose of giving pupils a practical knowledge of the languages and literatures of ancient Greece and Rome, and has taken up the teaching of grammatical metaphysics and philological subtilties as a substitute for Greek and Latin.

Among the first settlers of New England were many educated men. They brought with them a classical culture then common in England, but which now has no counterpart there, nor in this country, among men of their class. They were the men who founded Harvard College eight years after they landed, and laid the foundation of the American Nation. The freedom with which these men used the learned languages, and made quotations from classical authors, seems like pedantry, unless we remember that they thought in and spoke those languages, and that

classical writers were then as well understood by them as any authors they had. The manner in which they acquired such a familiarity with the ancient tongues has a bearing on the question now under consideration. They wrote many books which have come down to us, and their correspondence has been sacredly preserved. Hence we know much of their domestic life and literary habits. Of none of them do we know more than of the Mather family, who, for four generations and for a hundred years, had no rivals in New England as men of influence and intellectual power. From 1643 to 1723, eight members of the family were graduates of Harvard College, and the average age at which they entered college was twelve years and ten months. Richard, the senior Mather, arrived in Boston in 1635, and four of his sons were graduated at Harvard when one of the essential requisitions for entrance was the speaking of

Latin. He was an Oxford student and was the principal of a public school in England when he was fifteen years of age. His two elder sons, Samuel and Nathaniel, entered Harvard at thirteen, and graduating went to England, where they settled and were eminent ministers. Eleazar, the third son, entered Harvard at fifteen, and Increase, the youngest, at thirteen. The latter became the president of Harvard College. We know the method by which Increase taught his own children, and we may presume it was the same by which his father had taught him. He had three sons graduate at Harvard: Cotton, Nathaniel and Samuel. Cotton Mather describes the method by which he and his brothers and sisters learned Greek, Latin and Hebrew. They heard these languages spoken in the family from their earliest childhood. In his book entitled "Manuductio ad Ministerium; Directions for a Candidate of the Ministry," 1726, he

says that Hebrew words were among the first upon his lips, and that, as a spoken language, Hebrew is "with very little diffi-"culty attained unto. Even our little dam-"sels make nothing of coming at this un-"common ornament." His own daughter, Katharine, spoke Hebrew at twelve years of age. With regard to Latin, his advice to the candidate for the ministry is, that he be "able not only to write, but to speak it with fluency as well as purity." "In-"deed," he says, "I cannot but wish that a "knowledge of the Syriac may come in as "an appendix to your knowledge of the "Hebrew; and having got the Hebrew "you will find the Syriac easily come-at-"able." He at that time wrote in seven languages.

When Cotton Mather entered Harvard College, at the age of eleven years and six months, he spoke Hebrew, Greek and Latin. He had composed many Latin treatises, had read Cicero, Ovid, Virgil

and Terence; had finished the Greek New Testament, and had read portions of Homer and Isocrates. His brother Nathaniel, who, when he entered college seven months older than Cotton, was quite as much of a scholar. Besides the usual Greek and Latin classic authors, he had read through the Old Testament in Hebrew and the New Testament in Greek, and had developed a taste for mathematics and astronomy. When he graduated at sixteen years of age, he delivered an oration in Hebrew, and about that time said that he was so familiar with Hebrew as a spoken language that he could use it for any purpose required. At the age of fifteen he published the "Boston Ephem-" eris," or Almanac, for 1685, having made the mathematical calculations himself, and the next year he published the "Eph-" emeris for 1686." Another brother, Samuel, entered Harvard before he was twelve years old, and was a scholar of similar attainments.

It may be said that such training of children leaves them no time to do or learn anything else. With the Mather family, as with John Stuart Mill, the reverse was true. It gave them time for everything else. The learning of languages which, by the modern methods, becomes such a labor and weariness later in life, and is so imperfectly done, was accomplished by them in childhood as a play and recreation, and in a practical and thorough manner. The amount of reading and writing they did as boys, and the study they gave to scholarly subjects, were simply amazing. Samuel appeared in print as an editor at fourteen years of age; Nathaniel was an author and mathematician at fifteen, and Cotton began to write books and to preach at sixteen, and was ordained a settled minister at nineteen over the North Church in Boston, where, as the leading preacher in New England, he remained forty-six years and

until his death. Nathaniel died at nineteen years of age. His memoir was printed in Boston and reprinted in London. On his grave-stone, in the burying ground at Salem, is this inscription: "An aged person "who had seen but nineteen winters in "this world." His biographer, having spoken of his learning and the enormous work he had done, says: "Besides all "this, in the vast field of theology, both "didactic and polemic, it is hardly credible "how little of it his travel had left un-"known. Rabbinic literature he had like-"wise no small measure of."

The mental activity of this family, so far as I know, has no counterpart in our day. More than six hundred of their books were printed, and at a time when there were no publishers, and all books were issued by subscription. This fact shows their immense contemporary popularity. Their books are now eagerly sought for by libraries and collectors, in Europe

as well as America, and, although they are *dead* books, in the sense that Greek and Latin are *dead* languages, their cost in the markets of the world exceeds that of the writings of any other five families which have ever lived in America.

What is the explanation of this record? That they were men of unusual natural abilities cannot be questioned; but in my judgment, the explanation, in a large measure, is found in the fact that they were educated by methods of teaching now lost sight of, and in the early years of childhood which are now allowed to run to waste. If our boys were prepared for college by the old and natural method, there would be ample time and room for making bibliography a feature in the university curriculum.

The second name which appears on the Harvard Triennial is that of George Downing. He was a Salem boy, and was graduated in the first class of 1642, at the age

of seventeen. The next year he was a tutor in the College, and at the age of twenty went over to England to enlist in the parliamentary army. He rose rapidly, and at the age of twenty-five he was a confidential member of Oliver Cromwell's staff. He was transferred to the State department, and was employed in secret negotiations with foreign governments. On one of these missions he had a two hours' conference with Cardinal Mazarin, the prime minister of Louis XIV., concerning the persecution of the Waldenses. He was successful in his mission and had the promise that the persecutions should cease. The conference was conducted in Latin, and with one of the most brilliant and scholarly men of that period. Where and how did George Downing, later Sir George, learn his Latin? It was certainly not picked up in the army, and was doubtless the same that he brought away from Harvard College. The qualifications then

required for admission to the College, and for taking the first degree, will show what that training was. The curriculum of the College in 1642 has been preserved. No one was admitted who was not "able to "understand Cicero, or such like Latin "author, *extempore*, and to make and "speak true Latin, in verse and prose, *suo* "*ut aiunt Marte*." The candidate for the first, or bachelor's degree, was required to "render at sight the Hebrew Old Testa- "ment and Greek New Testament into the "Latin tongue, . . . and to resolve them "logically." He was required, also, to write a thesis in one of the ancient languages on some scholarly subject, and to deliver and defend it successfully at a public exercise attended by the governor, magistrates, ministers, and all persons of quality in the Colony, at which no word of English was spoken. A great variety of subjects, other than those pertaining to the classical languages were studied in the College and

treated in theses. The small amount of Latin instruction which appears in the curriculum is noticeable; and is explained by the fact that Latin had been thoroughly learned as a written and spoken language before the students entered College. They were also required to speak Latin in the class room, at commons, and on the College grounds. Hebrew, Chaldee and Syriac were taught on Thursdays; and Fridays were, by all the classes, given up to rhetoric and English composition. The significance of the work on Fridays will later appear.

There are two classes of persons who will naturally oppose a return to the natural methods of learning the classical languages; (1), the teachers in preparatory schools who cannot speak the languages they teach, and who say these languages are not to be spoken because they are *dead* languages. The purpose of teaching them, they further say, is to discipline

the minds of the pupils, to strenghten their memories, to cultivate their discrimination and critical faculties, and to train them in grammar and general philology, in order that they may the better understand English and acquire facility in its use. They have not time, they assert, to give their pupils a familiarity with Greek and Roman literature. The second class of opponents, usually belated college graduates, would banish Greek and Latin, as well as the higher mathematics, from the College curriculum, and supply their places with modern languages and more of the natural sciences. Mr. Charles Francis Adams, ten years ago, expressed this popular hostility to classical studies in his Phi Beta Kappa address at Cambridge, which he entitled "A College Fetich." It was a special attack on Greek; but was equally applicable to Latin. "How," he said, "did Harvard "College prepare me and my ninety-two

"classmates for our work in life? The poor "old College prepared us to play our parts "in the world by compelling us to acquire "a superficial knowledge of two dead "languages." He confessed that, having devoted five years to the study of Greek, he, twenty-seven years after graduation, when he opened his Homer, could not read the Greek characters. The address was received with much popular favor; for it appealed to the experience of a multitude of graduates who, like himself, had forgotten Greek and Latin and who hoped and expected that they would soon disappear from the College curriculum. The result, however, of the lively discussion which the address brought on, has pointed in the opposite direction. A reaction soon took place, and the classics are now more appreciated and firmly established at Harvard than at any other period in modern times. The singular feature in this reactionary movement

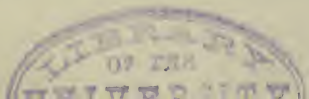
was, that the conservative element was not the faculty nor corporation, but was the students themselves who seemed to have an instinctive impression that the knowledge of the ancient classics lies at the basis of a liberal education.

This unrest at Cambridge concerning the classics and higher mathematics, of which Mr. Adams's address was the latest outcropping, has existed for more than seventy years. In 1825 the Corporation yielded to it and made a rule that students could pursue any study — as much or little of it as they chose — but could take no degree without completing the full curriculum. Students declined to take that sort of an education, and the scheme was a failure.

In 1838 the discussion revived against the mathematics; and it was provided that they should be made an optional at the end of freshman year. The professor of mathematics regretted the change, for he

could think of only one student who was likely to continue the study through the course. When the change was made, only seven, out of a class of fifty-four, dropped mathematics at the end of freshman year; and eleven took the higher four-years' course, which left the study in a higher position than before the change was made.

In 1841, the "modernists"—as Mr. Adams termed himself and his alleged reformers—renewed their attack on the study of the classical languages, and the corporation again yielded, by making them optional at the end of freshman year. President Quincy in his report on the subject, said: "A desire to open the "University to a larger class of persons "has long been the wish of the friends of "the institution. The amount of Greek "and Latin exacted as a condition for a "degree prevents many parents from send-"ing their sons to the College, because



"they regard such studies a waste of time "and labor." The result of the experiment was the same as the preceding one. The real scholars pursued their classical studies as optionals; and the stupid and lazy students took something which was easier. The old idea, therefore, of what a liberal education means, has for the last half century, and has to-day—notwithstanding the poor methods of instruction—a stronger hold upon the students than it has upon the faculties and corporations of our colleges.

Although the modern method of teaching Greek and Latin fails in its most important feature of giving the pupil a practical familiarity with these languages and knowledge of their literatures, the drill in philological gymnastics and grammatical pyrotechnics is an intellectual exercise in some respects beneficial to students. It does not, however, inspire in them the love of the classic languages and litera-

tures which they may carry into active life and be to them a perpetual diversion and recreation. Any system of instruction is faulty which leaves out of view the making of enthusiastic, genuine scholars who will educate themselves after they leave college; and, while they live, will never cease to be students. It may be said that very few of the whole number of college graduates, ever become, or expect to become, scholars. So much the worse for their instructors. If the pupils were properly taught and inspired, they would become scholars.

"Formerly," said Prof. Bowen of Cambridge, "we studied grammar in order to "read the classics; now-a-days the classics "are studied as a means of learning gram- "mar. Surely, a more effective means "could not have been invented of render- "ing the pupil insensible to the beauties of "the ancient poets, orators, and historians, "— of inspiring disgust alike with Homer

"and Virgil, Xenophon and Tacitus, by "making their words mere pegs on which "to hang long disquisitions on the latest "refinements of philology."

President Porter, of Yale, wrote fifteen years ago as follows: "It must not be "denied that the confidence of many of "our best students in the value of classical "studies, as pursued in our colleges, "has of late, been seriously impaired. The "protraction of the school method, the "imposition of difficult authors, the con- "finement of the attention for many "years to refined grammatical subtleties, "and the failure to encourage the reading "of easy authors in large quantities, are in "part the explanation of this decay of "enthusiasm for classical study as a liter- "ary discipline. We desire to see the "literary advantages of a classical course "reinforced by an inspiring love of the "best classical authors, and an enthu- "siastic desire to read them fluently. Let

"the classics be so studied that they shall "be loved and admired as *literature*, and "they will need no argument for their "vindication."

Prof. Gildersleeve, of Johns Hopkins University, regarded as one of the best classical scholars in the country, says: "Latin and Greek are to be studied pri- "marily for the knowledge of the life of "the Roman and Greek people as mani- "fested in language and literature; and "not because Latin and Greek are con- "venient vehicles for the communication "of a certain amount of linguistic phi- "losophy or comparative grammar. Such "matters are entirely out of place in the "early stages of study. The beginner "has to do with results, not processes. . . . "It is a capital mistake to introduce a "student into the maze of hypotheses in "which the formation of a language is "involved, before he has any practical "acquaintance with the language itself,

"before he has any insight into the liter-
"ature for the sake of which chiefly the
"language is to be learned. . . . The
"less the mastery of the subject on the
"part of the teacher, the greater seems to
"be the desire to make the treatment
"'scientific', and so,—in the plastic age of
"study, the golden opportunity of appro-
"priating the peculiar value of the classic
"languages, is thrown away."

It is apparent that the cause of the whole deficiency in modern classical education arises from the fact that the teachers in preparatory schools and colleges have so little practical knowledge of Greek and Latin *as languages*. Language is "human speech, the expression of "ideas by the voice." It is not grammar, rules of syntax, nor philology—it is something *spoken*. The teachers who fit our boys for the Universities are unable to speak these languages, or, with any facility or accuracy, give expression to their

thoughts in writing; and hence they are incompetent to teach Greek and Latin. The remedy is to find teachers who know the ancient languages as modern teachers know French and German. If they are not to be found, they must be educated as Melanchthon and Mill were educated. What would be thought of a German teacher who should have pupils under his care for several years, and then they could not speak or write German, nor understand it when spoken? It would be a poor compliment to him to say that his pupils were grounded in German grammar and well up in general philology.

While it is now generally admitted that the modern and protracted method of teaching in academies and preparatory schools is practically a failure, so far as giving the pupils a knowledge of Latin and Greek literatures is concerned, it is claimed that the grammatical drill is useful in training pupils to understand the struct-

ure and use of the English language, or, in other words, to make them good writers. On the other hand, do the facts show that this has been the result? An interesting exposé of the fallacy of the theory recently appeared in a "Report to "the Board of Overseers of Harvard Col- "lege by a Committee on English Com- "position and Rhetoric;" and also in articles on the same subject in the *Harvard Graduates Magazine*. An article in the January (1893) issue of the latter, is entitled "Education in the Preparatory Schools." The writers were Mr. Charles Francis Adams, the chairman of the Committee which reported to the Overseers, and William W. Goodwin, the senior professor of Greek. The investigation of the question: "How much do college freshmen "know of the English language?" was begun by the *Boston Herald* in 1890, by offering college scholarships for the best two compositions written under condi-

tions similar to those of the Harvard entrance examinations. There were two hundred and twenty competitors, all of whom held certificates that they were to take examinations that summer for entrance to the College. No one could compete who was not a resident of Massachusetts, or of two other New England States. The contest showed that the young men, whose average age was more than nineteeen, had a colossal incapacity for writing English. Only twenty-three of the papers were found worth sending to the Committee which was to make the award; and they were sternly condemned by the judges. These startling facts waked up the Overseers, and hence their examination and report which was based on about five hundred compositions written by students in the freshman class, and on the examination papers containing translations into English from advanced Latin and Greek, made by can-

didates who offered themselves for admission to the College in June 1892. The Committee print selections from these papers and *facsimiles* of the handwriting, with the blots, bad spelling, erasures, and interlineations. They make a droll exhibit. The assistance of an educated lady was called in to aid the Committee in the dreary examination, who later complained that she had suffered lasting intellectual deterioration in consequence of her well-meant efforts. In the case of one school, represented by an unusual number of candidates, she had, in consequence of mental stupefaction, been unable to distinguish one paper from another, except as her attention was drawn to the original orthography of these papers, and especially to that of one young man who spelt *Jupiter* with two *p*s. Only one paper she found which seemed in every respect — penmanship, expression, and correctness of rendering —

up to the level which might well have been insisted upon for all.

Prof. Goodwin comments on the report as follows: "The report of the Over-"seers' Committee on English contains "nothing that is new to those who have "long known the low standard in English "composition which the College feels com-"pelled to accept for admission. Indeed, "to many of those best acquainted with "this standard, the papers now published "by the Committeee seem unexpectedly "good. . . . The present evidence, how-"ever, establishes one important point be-"yond question: there is no conceivable "justification for using the revenues of "Harvard College, or the time and "strength of her instructors, in the vain "attempt to enlighten the Egyptian "darkness in which no small portion of "our undergraduates are sitting. The "college must do something to redeem "herself from disgrace, and to put the

"disgrace where it belongs; but she must "no longer spend time, strength, and "money on the hopeless task which she "has recently undertaken. Many good "people who read the Committee's report "will believe that our mother tongue is "singled out for neglect and contempt by "the preparatory schools. The low stand- "ard in English is only one of the many "results of the deplorable condition of "our lower education. . . . It is now a "familiar truth to most of us that stud- "ents come to Harvard College at nine- "teen, in most cases badly prepared to "pass an examination which boys of six- "teen and seventeen would find easy work "in England, Germany, France and "Switzerland. Most of these young men "have spent the preceding three, four or "five years in doing boy's work which "they should have finished before they "were sixteen."

Professor Goodwin further says:

"Though these extracts are given to "show the bad English, they are equally "astounding for the ignorance of Latin "and Greek which they disclose. It will "hardly be believed that Nos. 6 and 8 "[which he prints in parallel columns] "profess to be translations of the same "passage in the Iliad. . . . Although "no thorough reform can be expected "until *more time is gained* for all the pre- "paratory studies, . . . the college still "has a plain duty to perform without "delay."

Erasmus, Luther, Melanchthon, Montaigne, the Mathers, and Mill, *gained the time* for all the preparatory studies by learning the classical languages in early childhood.

The boys, whose accomplishments in English composition have here been so sternly criticised, did not represent the preparatory schools of the country at large; but only twelve of the most popu-

lar schools and academies in Boston and the vicinity. They were the Public Latin Schools of Boston, Cambridge, and Worcester, Andover Phillips Academy, Exeter Phillips Academy, Adams Academy of Quincy, and six well-known private preparatory schools. The western boys were not given a chance to appear in this roll of honor.

The headmasters of seven of these preparatory schools print replies to the Committee's report in the April issue of the *Harvard Graduates Magazine*, and the papers make interesting reading. The main facts alleged by the Committee on English they do not deny, nor seek to justify; but, on the other hand, deplore them, and undertake to lay a portion of the responsibility on the College itself whose instructions and customs they have sought to follow. The first reply begins thus: "The unsatisfactory results of the "training in preparatory schools is too

"well known to admit contradiction. To "make an accurate diagnosis of the "trouble, to locate it, and then to treat "it, is our first duty."

There is time to indicate only a few points made by the headmasters. They say the quality of training in the common schools has deteriorated; and "the in- "creasing immaturity of boys of ten years "of age — an increase very perceptible "during the last twenty years — is one of "the chief obstacles with which teachers "of preparatory schools have to contend. "Pupils come to the preparatory schools "unwisely and unequally trained, and at "such an age that only by unremitting "pressure, with an eye ever on the College "examination, at eighteen or nineteen "years of age, they drop over the College "threshold, exhausted, without reserve "power, not trained to think or to work, "crammed, and having missed the great "end of school life." One of the princi-

pals says that "the fault does not lie in "the preparatory schools, but in the Col- "lege itself; for the schools are doing "what the College itself was doing in the "Freshman and Sophomore years fifty "years ago, and the College has not "changed its requisitions for admission."

Entrance examinations as now conducted, some of them say, are a menace to the thorough preparatory training a boy should receive. Education for its own sake is lost sight of in order to attain another end,—that of passing the College examination, which one master characterizes as abounding in puzzles and conundrums that may test what the Creator has done for the boy, but not what the boy himself and his teachers have done for him. Who has a better knowledge of a boy's fitness for college than his instructors? They recommend that the conventional entrance examination be abolished, and that students be admitted on proba-

tion by certificate from the headmaster. Candidates are frequently admitted by examination who could not have had a certificate from the principal. The master of the Cambridge Latin School said that recently Harvard College would have lost several excellent foot-ball players if candidates from his school were admitted by his certificate alone.

It will be seen from this rapid survey that there is a confessed and radical defect running through the entire system of modern education — the public schools, the private schools, the preparatory schools, the colleges and universities. Each grade, while admitting the fact, has a disposition to assign the responsibility for the defect to those of a higher or lower rank than its own, when probably all are equally responsible.

I am happy, in concluding this address, to return to the more cheerful strain with which I set out.

To those of us who graduated thirty, forty, or more years ago, books, outside of the text-books used, had no part in our education. They were never quoted, recommended, nor mentioned by the instructors in the class-room. As I remember it, Yale College Library might as well have been in Weathersfield or Bridgeport as in New Haven, so far as the students in those days were concerned. The college societies, however, supported and managed wholly by the undergraduates, had good libraries, and here was where the students, and the professors besides, found their general reading. I was fortunate in being connected with one of those libraries, and there I began the study of bibliography; but never had the slightest assistance from any member of the faculty. There were then no elementary books on the subject, and hence by groping alone through the book shelves, I picked up some knowledge of books and

acquired a taste which I have not been able to throw off to this day. How much easier could I have made the journey, if I had found blazed trees along the way, and a guide who had traveled the path before me.

During the past twenty years there has been a great advance in the study of bibliography in the leading universities. Among these may be especially mentioned Johns Hopkins, Yale, Harvard, Cornell, and Michigan. Good work is also being done in other institutions. None of the universities named have as yet quite come up to the high standard of having a professor of bibliography; but they are moving in that direction. In several universities the librarians give lectures on bibliography, and instruction to classes in the use of books. The development already reached is seen in the rapid increase of these libraries in the accession of the latest and best works on all the subjects

taught in the university; by the professors citing these books, calling attention to them, taking them into the class-rooms, and by this method encouraging the students to make for themselves an independent and original investigation of any subject. As the work has been going on, money has been liberally contributed by the friends of the institutions for erecting suitable library buildings, procuring the necessary books, and conducting University Extension lectures.

Nothing more readily appeals to the popular sympathy than work of this kind, or forms a firmer bond of fraternity between the university and the community at large. The great universities which keep their hands on the popular pulse, are those which receive the great endowments from private munificence. On some special subjects of universal interest no libraries in the land have such complete collections of recent books as some

of the university libraries. Writers, who would have access to the most abundant materials, must visit these libraries. By what other means can a great university exert a more beneficent influence and retain the affection and sympathy of the public and of its own graduates?

The popularity of a university once depended wholly upon the professional reputation of its instructors. Now the leading questions relate to the size, character and value of its library. The presence of a large body of post-graduate students is an inspiring feature of university life, and to the public a guaranty of the high scholarship and superior educational advantages of the institution. These students cannot be secured and retained unless they have access to a large and well-furnished library.

One of the most interesting features of modern beneficence is, that so much of it has been devoted to the endowment and support of libraries; and yet the univer-

sity libraries of the West have not as yet had their due share. The Northwestern University Library, through the generosity of the venerable Vice-President of the Board of Overseers, has received a library fund which in the near future, it is hoped, will yield considerable income; and he has also given $50,000 towards the construction of the Orrington Lunt Library Building to cost double that sum; but still the library wants are not supplied. There should be a further and large endowment for the purchase of books of history, literature, natural science, political and social science, the arts, and of other departments, which will enable the professors and students of the University to keep abreast of the latest development of literary and scientific progress, and will attract scholars and literary men to visit, and many to reside near, the University. The larger the endowment the better. If I should name the sum I thought was necessary, it

would probably be thought extravagant; but it would not be larger than the friends of the University can easily bestow. Let us hope that the completion of the new library building will be the beginning of a larger development of the resources and usefulness of the Northwestern University Library.

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